**Case History: K-6**

**Directions:** The case history is followed by two short-answer questions.

**Sara**

**Scenario**

Six-year-old Sara lives with her mother, who has a relaxed schedule. Ms. Mercer, Sara's teacher, notes that Sara is often tired and inattentive after arriving late. Sara says she frequently stays up past midnight if others are up. Ms. Mercer, a second-year teacher, has asked her mentor to observe Sara and suggest ways to help Sara achieve Ms. Mercer's purposes.

**Observation: Ms. Mercer's Class, April 30**

**Pre-observation interview notes:**

Ms. Mercer says, "The purposes of first grade are to teach children 'school survival skills' and reading, writing, and arithmetic." She adds, "Sara needs help with 'survival skills,' including following directions, concentrating on a task to its completion, and being attentive to the lessons I present."

**Mentor Classroom Observation—Focus on Sara Porter:**

As Ms. Mercer's class begins, the children play with puzzles and other activities requiring construction or manipulation. Two children "write" on a flannel board, using letters kept in alphabetical stacks in a box. They return the letters so they fit exactly over their counterparts. Ms. Mercer praises them for neatness. She instructs them to return to their previously assigned groups as Sara enters the room.

The students are seated at six tables, four students at each table. Ms. Mercer explains, "Tables one and two will work on reading first, while tables three and four will solve math problems, and tables five and six will draw page illustrations for your collaborative Big Book. After twenty-five minutes, the groups will stop the first activity and begin working on a second task without changing seats. Twenty-five minutes later, you will change again to work on the activity each group has not yet done. The math groups and those doing illustrations will hand in their work when time is called. I will work with the two groups who are reading aloud." She plans to monitor progress of students in the reading group.

Sara is at table 1. Ms. Mercer begins with this table and table 2, working on reading. Several children read aloud. Ms. Mercer praises them. When Ms. Mercer calls on Sara, she begins reading in the wrong place. Joyce, seated next to Sara, points to where they are. Ms. Mercer says, "Sara, you would know where we are if you were paying attention." She calls on another child. Sara looks hurt but soon starts to follow along in the book. Subsequently, Ms. Mercer calls on Sara, who now has the right place. Ms. Mercer then calls on another child.

During the math activity, Sara, yawning frequently, is the last to open her workbook and write her name. When she completes the page, she waits. She seems puzzled, although Ms. Mercer has already given directions. Sara gets up, sharpens a pencil, and returns to the wrong seat. "That's MY seat," accuses an angry boy. Sara apologizes and returns to her seat. Later, she waits to have her workbook checked. She has not torn out pages as Ms. Mercer instructed. Sara is told to "do it right." Sara has not creased the paper as Ms. Mercer demonstrated, so the pages do not tear out easily. Sara sucks her thumb and holds her ear for a minute. Suddenly, she yanks the paper and the pages come out with jagged edges. She receives three dots for her work. Ms. Mercer says, "Sara, this is good. I wish you could earn four dots" (the maximum). Sara slaps herself on the forehead.

During the illustration activity, Sara helps several others who have trouble thinking of ideas. Sara's illustration is among the best handed in.

After the group work, Ms. Mercer places a large pad on an easel and says, "Now we're going to write about our trip to the art museum yesterday. Raise your hand and tell me something you saw or did in the museum." No one responds. She says, "Tell me the first thing we did at the museum." Sara raises her hand, offering a first sentence. After each response, Ms. Mercer asks, "What happened next?" or "What did we see next?" She prints each child's contribution.

**Our Trip to the Art Museum**

We rode the elevator to the second floor. We looked at different shapes on the ceiling. We saw a statue with a white triangle. We went to another room where we saw some pictures. We rode back down to the first floor. On our way out, we saw a painting of a grandfather and a boy.

During the writing of the group story, Sara fidgets in her seat, stares out the window, and makes a face at her neighbor.

**Post-observation interview notes:**

Ms. Mercer says, "Sara is a top performer in academic achievement and on standardized tests, consistently scoring among the top five students in the class. She's so bright. It's a shame she's late and distracted so much." The mentor replies, "There may be something else bothering Sara. Although easily distracted, there may be other explanations for her behavior. Let's talk more."

## Sample Question 1

Ms. Mercer is concerned that Sara is often tired and inattentive after arriving late to school.

* Identify TWO specific actions Ms. Mercer might take to connect school and Sara's home environment for the benefit of Sara's learning.
* For each action, explain how that action will benefit Sara's learning. Base your response on principles of fostering positive relationships with family to support student learning and well-being.